

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT
POLICY

Voluntary Public

Date: 12/1/2010

GAIN Report Number: EZ1007

Czech Republic

Post: Prague

Czech Ag Ministry Openly Promotes Advantages of GM Crops

Report Categories:

Biotechnology, Potato, Grains, Corn

Agriculture in the News

Approved By:

Michael T. Henney

Prepared By:

Jana Mikulasova

Report Highlights:

Czech Ag Minister Fuksa: “Genetically modified crops have future.” Amflora potatoes are used for starch production in the Czech Republic. Ag Ministry welcomes new technologies that will enhance the competitiveness of Czech producers.

General Information:

Biotechnology Trade and Production:

“Genetically modified crops have future.” This is how the recent press statement of the Czech Ministry of Agriculture begins. The text was released after Minister Fuksa visited a starch producing plant in Hodiskov, where the genetically modified potato Amflora is processed. The statement continues saying that thanks to GM crops some farms that would not otherwise survive, now have a future.

The Czech Republic is one the few growers of genetically modified crops within the European Union. The Government of the Czech Republics’ attitude towards biotechnology appears quite rational, and in line with Czech scientists who strongly support its adoption.

In 2005, Czech farmers started growing genetically modified Bt corn. After several years of expansion, in 2008 cultivation of Bt corn started on a decline, from 8,380 ha that year to 4,680 ha in 2010. Farmers attribute problems with marketing the Bt corn to processors and retailers as the cause for this decline. Reportedly some milk buyers now require a written statement that their cows were not fed Bt corn, even though that feed ingredient does not transfer GM traits to milk nor could such traits be traced. Furthermore, governmental regulations do not mandate milk fed such feed have special labeling. Pressure for this producer declaration appears to be driven by foreign or foreign-owned buyers. Germany is the largest destination market for Czech products.

The Amflora potato situation is different. This year the Amflora potato was grown in the Czech Republic on 150 ha. The growers own the starch producing plant as well, so selling the raw product was not an issue. Further, selling the final product should not be a problem either as it is used for industrial purposes.

Minister Fuksa added that since the EU common market organization for potato starch would be abolished in 2012, his Ministry welcomed technologies that would increase the productive competitiveness of Czech farmers.

Biotechnology Policy:

One of the Minister’s stated priorities is to reduce the government bureaucracy. He has indicated his intent to remove duplicate notification requirements mandated for farmers growing genetically modified crops. He would also like to provide additional support for applied research in the area of biotechnology. On the EU level, he is advocating for speeding up the approval process for new GM products and for pragmatism over irrationality in the continent’s approach towards GM products.